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ABSTRACT

This case study investigated the organizational culture of a Hawaiian community college and how it both contributed to and prevented organizational chaos during a period of change. The study made use of themes from William G. Golding's novel, "Lord of the Flies," to analyze the setting. The period of change started with the arrival of several top administrators from outside the community who brought a different organizational approach. The clashes between this group and the local group ultimately led five of the outside administrators to leave within 3 months forcing another type of organizational crisis. Data for the study were collected through archival sources and by a participant observer who conducted interviews and attended meetings. The study found that the conflicts between the values of the two groups and their inability to come together led to a disintegration of the organizational structure. The study concluded that: (1) higher education leaders must understand the role that culture plays in their organizations; (2) leaders must realize that though they are important they are only participants; (3) as participants they must recognize their moral obligations in a democratic society. Included are 15 references. (JB)

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Lord of the Flies Community College: A Case Study of Organizational Disintegration

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ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Park Plaza Hotel & Towers in Boston, Massachusetts, October 31-November 3, 1991. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Golding is but one of many novelists who reminds us of the thin veneer that covers and binds our civilization. The power of Lord of the Flies is found in Golding's artful telling of the rapid disintegration of the civilization the boys knew and their reversion to barbarism. In the novel the breaking of Piggy's glasses is a symbolic termination of one of the last remnants of the civilization the boys left behind. Without the guiding hand of the adult world, these boys soon formed their own savage culture--or in essence, reverted to their own animal existence.

Likewise, this study examines the organizational disintegration of a community college, which the dean of instruction compared, intriguingly, to Lord of the Flies. Our use of this analogy helps us to understand how fragile our organizations really are and how a loss of college leadership can affect an entire system. In this particular community college, within a period of three months, the president, dean of instruction, coordinator of developmental education and the director of data processing all resigned to accept positions at other institutions. In addition, the director of personnel, who also served as the affirmative action officer, left for elective surgery. The loss of these top administrators threw the college into a chaotic situation, which one faculty member described as a feeling that the college had been "decapitated."

As Tierney notes (1988:3) "Even the most seasoned college and university administrators often ask themselves, 'What holds this place together? Is it mission, values, bureaucratic procedures, or strong personalities?'" These are the basic questions that guide our interpretive case study: How can we understand better what within an organization's culture is responsible for binding the organization?

Geertz (1973) defines culture as the "webs of significance humans spin about themselves." Similarly, the objective of our study is to identify how the webs that hold a community college together both conflict and compliment the formal structure and contribute to the present crisis within one organization. This case study offers an extraordinary opportunity to examine a community college whose insides and underlying culture are exposed to examination.

Specifically, from the case study of this community college we investigate how the culture of the college both contributed to and prevented organizational chaos among its surviving members. Our investigation is interpretive not functionalist in that we seek to discover rather than impose our preconceived ideas that give the organization its meaning. First, we present the basic cultural and organizational literature that guides our interpretation. Next, we present the case of Lord of the Flies Community College (LFCC--a pseudonym, obviously) and then present the findings from our investigation. Finally, we discuss the meaning of these findings and reflect on the implications we draw from our investigation.

Organizational Culture and Critical Theory

Tierney (1988:10) explains that culture provides organizational members with a sense of meaning and identity. Culture also shapes behavior and increases the stability and effectiveness of the organization because members understand the parameters in which they are to operate. Organizations, however, do not always have one cultural imperative and are often the site of cultural conflict and competition in which participants bring their varying external beliefs with them to contest whose values and beliefs are to be dominant (Kempner, 1990). Gouldner (1957) distinguishes two such competing groups as "cosmopolitans" and "locals."

Although Gouldner's distinction does not always describe an organization's reality, local and senior staff members of many community colleges often watch cosmopolitan managers drop in, attempt to transform their college, and then move on. Transformational leadership, however, has been heralded as the style of the future for community college presidents (see Roueche, Baker, and Rose, 1989, for example). Bensimon (1989), on the other hand, disputes the concept of transformational leadership and calls for "trans-vigorational" leadership instead. Bensimon's research leads her to conclude that university presidents need to honor the existing culture and seek to "transvigorate" it, rather than transform it. She notes that president's desires for transformation are impeded by the inheritance of an "institutional history," as well as an "established constituency."

In Geertz's terminology each organization has its cultural webs of significance that new presidents ignore at their own peril. Rather than viewing new leaders as change agents or heroes coming to transform or save an organization from itself, Tierney (1990) reminds us that Burns' original conception of the transformational leader is a moral one. He explains that the transformational leader "is capable of understanding the nature of the constituent's reality." To quote Burns (1978, p. 20): "Transforming leadership ultimately becomes <u>moral</u> in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both."

Such mutually responsive and democratic leadership, whatever it is called, is sensitive to the cultural webs of an organization and aware of the myths surrounding the expertise of administrators and scientific management (see Foster, 1990). The crisis for many college presidents is due to their ignorance of the underlying dynamics of culture and their own myth regarding their purpose, role, and ability to lead. Cosmopolitan leaders must be especially aware of norms that are "sacred" within an institution's culture (see Corbett, Firestone and Rossman, 1987). A leader tramples on such norms only at great peril.

Because the cultural webs individuals weave are so abstract, the power, importance, and sacred aspects of an organization's existing culture can be overlooked by the unwary. Only rarely are cultural webs as transparent as when the upper layer of leadership is stripped away while the underlying cultures vie for dominance. Even when the cultural webs are transparent, one must still interpret the meaning of these webs, since they do not speak for themselves. Herein, lies the distinct value of critical interpretation, the perspective we follow here.

Critical theorists adopt a cultural perspective to understand the multiple realities individuals see and create within their own lives, organizations, and societies. Because critical theorists understand social institutions as constructed, their aim is to submit social institutions to scrutiny that makes participants aware of their contribution to the reality of these institutions. The basic premise of critical theory, as Tierney (1991, p. 41) explains, is "that the world is marked by enormous suffering and injustice." Critical theorists believe this unjust situation is due to the "false consciousness" or "systematic ignorance" that individuals have about themselves, their role in contributing to their culture, and to the larger society (Fay, 1987, p. 27).

Understanding and identifying individuals' systematic ignorance of the current social arrangements that perpetuate injustices (to women or minorities, for example) are the goals of critical theorists. Similarly, our goal in studying LFCC is to understand the false consciousness and the ignorance that surrounds the nature of the competing cultural perspectives of cosmopolitans and locals. Just as Lord of the Flies offered Golding a vehicle to understand and comment on the culture of British public schools and its thin veneer, we employ a case study of LFCC to understand the influence and intransigence of the local culture and the tenuous nature of the cosmopolitan culture of the departing administrators.

Case Study Methodology

Yin (1984:47) explains that limiting a study to a single case is "eminently justifiable...where the case serves a revelatory purpose." This is the point of our case study where the choice of one college enables us to "reveal" and to understand the cultural complexity and dynamics of organizational change. Following Yin's (1984:47) perspective, our goal in this case study is "to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generation)." Our purpose here is not hypothesis testing, but, rather, hypothesis generation to gain a greater understanding of the effect of culture and the role leaders can play in interacting with cultural webs, rather than attempting to overcome them.

LFCC serves approximately 1500 FTE students and has 45 full-time faculty members. It is the oldest community college in the

state (founded over 25 years ago) and is steeped in traditions of the local area--a combination of rural and small-town living isolated from the rest of the state. One of the authors served as a participant observer in this study, attending meetings, conducting eight formal and twenty informal interviews with various faculty and administrators, including the president, dean of instruction, head of the faculty union negotiating team, president of the faculty senate, and the new acting president of the college. Minutes from the faculty senate and other archival data provided additional sources of information on the college. Individual demographic information provided further background data on how long participants had been employed at the college, for example, in an effort to identify cosmopolitan versus local individuals.

Using a participant observer in this case study has both advantages and disadvantages. Participant observation allows the researcher to gather information from a wide variety of settings and sources. Background information is more complete and a long-range view of the institution is available. Disadvantages include the biases of the observer, the limited access to particular types of meetings, such as high level administrative team meetings, and the responses of particular faculty or staff to an individual well-known on campus.

Lord of The Flies Community College

What was most striking from the onset of our investigation has been the conflict between those who readily label themselves locals and the imported, cosmopolitans who come to the college from elsewhere. First, we present our findings and interpretations regarding what one individual termed the "suspended animation" of the local culture which pervades the faculty and the larger community in general. Second, we address the cosmopolitans, who are primarily the harbingers of change and transformation for the college. Finally, we consider the level of conflict and contestation between these two groups, their perspectives, and their mutual ignorance about one another.

Local Culture: Suspended Animation

As Tierney explains (1988, p. 10), local culture and its surrounding community provides members with a sense of meaning and identity. Certainly, the cultural norms and values that developed over time at LFCC were, as Schein suggests (1985), a means of survival for organizational members. The former long-term president of LFCC neglected faculty and student needs, and focused instead on the construction of new buildings on campus. A mid-level manager stated that, "One of the side effects was to...push faculty and staff into becoming very self-centered within the institution for survival."

In the past, the college operated much like a family, albeit

an abusive one at times, with the president as "big daddy," dealing with the faculty in a very paternalistic way. The head of the faculty union felt the former president "was very paternalistic, and treated this college like his family and like, 'We have to scold you sometimes,' but that was like dad would have to scold you." As a result, there is a curious nostalgia among the older faculty about the past. They speak of it as a time when there was "a tighter knit group....There was a lot more closeness." Here is evidence of Geertz's webs of significance, if not the same metaphor of weaving webs of influence. For many locals, the culture of the community college had provided meaning and a sense of community among faculty and staff.

Other more cosmopolitan members of the organization, such as the dean of instruction, acknowledged the former family atmosphere, but recognized that much about it resembled a dysfunctional family:

> The institutional climate, when I came, was...very repressed, holding a lot of people back, denial of problems. You know there have been faculty members who said that as the dean I should stop accusing them of being a cancer patient because really everything is just fine and I just want to change things....And I think we've seen the old guard, the old boys' network, whatever, who've really been in control of the institution and they've done that sort of playground bully style, by keeping other faculty quiet.

New faculty members coming into the organization or "family," not surprisingly felt overwhelmed by the surrounding culture. One new member, in her second year stated that, "For the last two years I have felt absolutely powerless." These new members, as well as some old ones, became the primary victims of this dysfunctional family atmosphere. One manager stated that the organization was dysfunctional or sick, so sick that some administrators felt the place should be blown apart in order to start over again.

Regardless of how change is effected, through destruction of the local culture, transformation of the local culture or efforts to build upon the existing culture, it is evident at LFCC that culture and institutional mission are inextricably intertwined. The external culture of the community informs the mission and the mission, in turn, defines and is defined by the culture of the institution in a tapestry or web of connections.

The definition of LFCC's mission and who defines it is, not surprisingly, problematic. One new faculty member stated that the long-term faculty or "old guard," "don't understand what a community college really is." He envisions an institution with "five strong links" that works together. He believes the college's "transfer program is strong, so the others need to be built from that."

Alternately, the local culture of the college, with its long-term faculty members, holds a traditional view of the college and its mission as that of primarily a transfer institution. One long-term faculty member was concerned about the loss of more and more traditional students. Rather than look for other markets to serve, he felt the college should do everything in its power to run programs that would attract a larger percentage of the local high school graduates:

> We're going to get less and less all the time if we don't do something for those young people to attract them. They're not attracted to walking onto campus with 30 and 40 year olds. We're losing a valuable resource if we don't get as many of our bright young kids as we can.

Here we see the evidence of what the new president of the college described as an institution that "had long-term leadership...and a long-term focus on providing services to traditional high school students, traditional day students, traditional day programs."

The impact of the old culture has been to stifle growth at the community, the college and the individual level. Much like the boys in Lord of the Flies, the local culture emphasized conflict and individual interests. Thus, the college served only the strong, leaving the weak to fend for themselves, or become victims in need of empowerment, as the dean stated. The president described the community as one that "thrives on conflict....That is the persona of this area. [It is built] on very individualistic people...the common good doesn't necessarily prevail because we respect the individuality of groups and individuals to the extreme." He feels the impact on the community has been to "impede a certain amount of community and social growth."

Likewise, the organization has not been able to move toward a more comprehensive mission or to use the talents of many of its members because of the level of bullying and fear inherent in the culture. One old timer, for instance, described the former president as "allowing other administrators to kind of run their own private little torture chambers." A new faculty member stated that the place was in an "archaic state," a state of "suspended animation," because so many of the people had been there for so long, with little experience of other environments, and an "extreme resistance to any new ideas." She explained:

> Not only is the curriculum out of date, but it is out of date because people prefer it that way and have no particular wish to change....My perception of the faculty is that there are several voices that are exceedingly loud, and they intimidate and drown out those milder, more conservative, and to my way of thinking, more reasonable voices.

The dean, in an effort to counteract the abusive or dysfunctional elements in the culture, began efforts "to help some

people feel, the word empowered is so trite any more, but it is true, to feel some power in themselves to resist the victim role." Yet despite these efforts, in the end, the president, the dean and various other administrative and faculty members all left the institution. Thus the wild local culture was left to take over, much as the boys took over in Lord of the Flies, when no adults were around.

Perhaps part of the reason advocates of the local culture resist and impede change to such a great extent is that they equate growing with leaving. Thus the locals fear change, new ideas, all those things that they see threatening the stability of the institution. They remain nostalgic for the old ways, the old times and cling to traditional notions of mission. One faculty member stated, "I know what they're doing, trying to get the right numbers for the next biennium....Maybe I'm standing still and the rest of the world is spinning, I don't know." Here, despite some acknowledgement that clinging to the old ways may be dangerous, this faculty member continues to long for a time when numbers and accountability did not matter. These "good old days" were often simpler, because they seemed good only at the expense of other's freedom or justice.

The longing for less complicated times, however, is often indicative of the systematic ignorance that perpetuates discriminatory social arrangements against women, minorities, and other marginalized groups. The times were much simpler when only certain groups participated in social benefits and excluded groups were kept in their place. Longing for stability, however, may be a legitimate reaction to rapid and unfocused change and not a protective reaction to conserve privileges not available to marginalized social groups. Transformation or change is not always beneficial, nor is lack of change necessarily stagnation. Stability for many institutions and communities may enable thoughtful and just adaptations to rapid change.

LFCC must continually negotiate its mission and culture as it replaces administrators and faculty with cosmopolitans, who are, by definition, at odds with the local culture. LFCC's basic dilemma is the choice of mission over its focus as a transfer-oriented junior college or a comprehensive, community college that requires integrating the full range of its constituents: mature adults, reentry women, underrepresented, career renewers, reverse transfers, on-job trainees, and joint high school enrollees (Deegan and Tillery, 1985, pp. 26-27). To resolve this dilemma, however, the administration faces changing a culture which is embedded in the traditional mission of community colleges, serving transfer students. The local culture is eroding, however, as old faculty and administrators are replaced by cosmopolitans. The local culture cannot reproduce quickly enough to stem the tide of cosmopolitans.

Cosmopolitan Culture: Transformation

The new individuals at LFCC and their perspectives are similar to the cosmopolitan culture Gouldner describes. It is characterized by more commitment to professional goals and values, more interest in upward mobility and the use of state or national standards as yardsticks. The dean described the new hires as "a different breed of people." She felt they were "generally more forward thinking. That's why they were hired....and some of them don't stay, because the place is really hard on them."

The president described his efforts to bring in outside evaluators, as a way of expanding awareness of similar programs at other colleges around the state. "One of the greatest struggles experienced in this college is bringing in outside evaluators. The comment was, "You don't trust us." And I said, "No! That's the way academic people work is they bring in their colleagues from other institutions." He described his efforts to convince the faculty to try new or more cosmopolitan ideas as "trying to convince a staff that doesn't necessarily have a broad perspective...from their previous twenty years in this community." Evident here is the president's cosmopolitan value of "academic people", professional and state or national versus local standards and values.

One new faculty member's suggestion for changing the local culture to a more cosmopolitan view of the organization was to build on the strengths of the locals, that it doesn't cost that much money to target particularly able and dedicated faculty and "use their strengths to get things done."

The faculty or locals both resent the cosmopolitans' efforts to change the institution and their lack of long term commitment. The union president complained that the president doesn't "take pride of ownership" in the college. His style is "a little less personal." In questioning his lack of commitment, the union president stated,

> I'd like to see a president and a dean that are interested in taking more ownership of the college....On the one hand, you sure don't want to stifle anybody's ability to move up and to achieve their goals, but being very selfish, you also want them to stay here and commit, you know, make long-term commitments.

Cultural Conflict

Whether it is called transition or transformation, there is no doubt that the locals see LFCC as changing and that the cosmopolitans want it to change. This inherent conflict between these two cultural groups raises basic questions on the direction that change should take, the method of changing the college, and how to overcome the barriers to change. It is evident from the

above discussion that there is much disagreement between the locals and the cosmopolitans about the direction and mission of LFCC. In addition, there is disagreement and discussion about the method of changing the college. One faculty member stated that the dean had made the mistake of fighting the old guard and losing. "I think she really lost. I think it's good for everybody, including her, that she's leaving....I think she had some new ideas that she brought in, but I think that if she had built from the strength and moved to the areas that she thinks the community college has to move to, she would have had less trouble getting what she wanted done."

On the other hand, one administrator felt that the president had relied too much on participatory management in trying to instigate change. "So then he ends up trying to get them to participate and in the process he empowers them....It makes them more sick....You don't have participatory management for the criminally insane." She felt that for a small group of individuals, those the dean had labeled **"playground bullies,"** you should

> take their little butts in your office and you sit them down and you say this is how I view it. This is what's been going on. You know, take your donuts and run if you don't want to play this game. We haven't had a president that's done that.

Some new administrators and faculty believed that change would come as "the newer faculty...simply eventually began to outweigh the voices of the old in shear numerical representation." Yet, in trying to initiate change through the creation of a critical mass of cosmopolitans or newcomers, the dean wrestled with the impact change has had on the institution and its culture for faculty and staff. She was going through "some real soul searching about being a change agent," asking, "What is my legacy to this place?" She felt the institutional climate had

> gone from repression and denial to turmoil....As you move a culture...you'll move from 'a' to 'z' and I think no matter how good your process skills are, if you're really trying to change a deeply embedded culture, you're going to create chaos before you get transformed values.

The instructional dean, as a cosmopolitan and as a woman, was disruptive merely by her entry and existence in the organization. A new faculty member clearly echoed the dean's perception of turmoil in the organization by saying, "I think this is a chaotic place. There is just no process that is consistent....For the last two years I have felt absolutely powerless."

Adding to the chaos caused by the presence of cosmopolitan administrators was the local faculty's need to feed off each other. One administrator described the faculty as "having parasitic features. You know, they live off of each other." She felt it was

important to send faculty out to other community colleges to help them feed on new ideas and to "keep them from feeding on each other." One new faculty member described this parasitic feature as the result of boredom: "If you have been in the same job for twenty years or more, and you have relatively little interest in the job any longer, then you look for other outlets, and I suspect that's what's been happening in some cases." Some new faculty felt the chaos was necessary in order shake up the old guard, to "educate them on what a comprehensive community college is."

Yet in the middle of this transition or transformation, the dean, the president, and other key administrators and faculty left the institution just as the local community began to become "educated" about comprehensive community colleges. Although the president cited lack of resources as "the largest single barrier to change" the second barrier was the "rural communities [that] are not eager to change." He reported a lack of "professional openness and awareness and willingness to examine and try new things" as characteristic of these rural communities. Ultimately, the president felt that the community and the college might not choose to broaden their services: "I, as the president of the college, can have my goals and visions and if they are not consistent with where the college wants to go and what the community wants to do, then I am in the wrong place." According to this president, the college must ask: "Do we want to be a comprehensive community college or do we want to be a narrow service institution? Are we a social service agency or are we a real college? By whose definition? What is a real college?"

Long-term faculty are asking what a "real" college should be from a different point of view. For example, one faculty member observed:

> The administration just looks at the numbers and as long as they can make the numbers work, they're relatively happy. One of the things they're proud of is that their FTE is up. Well, my question is 'How is the FTE up?' You know if you do all these little quick fixes to get FTE up, that's not a college....They'll tell you that 'this is the way [other colleges] do it...I guess it's all part of the big game, you know, part of what everybody does, but I'm just saying that I don't know that I think that's what a college should be.

The roots of this enduring conflict over the mission of LFCC are based both in the individualistic nature of the community and the organizational culture. The local culture has a history of having to be "very self-centered within the institution for survival," as one administrator put it. The president has described the community and the college as places that "thrive on conflict." He feels conflict has inhibited the growth of the organization. He states that, "You have other communities that have economic difficulty that have been able to move forward slowly

because they haven't necessarily had the same level of conflict."

The institution has a history of the loudest views surviving as the prevailing views. One new faculty member stated that, "It's unfortunate, but the few really do out shout the many. Sometimes what they're shouting about is wonderfully on target, but the method of doing so is a very hostile and antagonistic activity. I've come to the personal conclusion that it's a form of entertainment for them."

The presence of two cultures, the cosmopolitan and the local, creates inherent conflict within the institution. These factions both struggle for power and positions that will enhance their respective ideologies. Scarce resources mean that both sides often come from a position of poverty consciousness, forcing decisions about new programs to include the elimination of present programs or services. "So then you are making a relative decision," stated the president, "about which service is more important. And that's very emotionally draining to an institution to say, 'That is more important than that,' when they are both important." The result is an institution in which the change makers become drained and then abandon the place to the local culture. This college, like Golding's young boys, now awaits the arrival of another set of administrators, who will face the same dilemmas as those who have left. In resolving this conflict, the organization has effected one of the few, possibly viable, solutions to the dilemma, a compromise. LFCC has chosen a new cosmopolitan president but a local academic dean. How well each understands and respects the other's culture will determine the success of this solution. A failure will once again plunge the college into turmoil as the cosmopolitans battle the local culture for dominance in a continuing replay of Lord of the Flies.

Conclusions and Implications

The implications of our study of Lord of the Flies Community College are threefold: first, is the necessity for higher education leaders to understand the critical role culture plays in their organizations. Second, leaders must realize, as well, that although they are an important part of the institution, they are, nonetheless, merely participants in the organization's reality. And, finally, recognizing that their role within organizations is not as managers of culture but as participants, leaders must understand their moral obligations in a democratic society.

Respect for the dignity of other cultures is essential if individuals are to coexist peacefully within society and within the organizations and institutions they create. Leaders, in particular, who are ignorant or falsely conscious of other cultures doom themselves and their organizations to turmoil and the perpetuation of social injustices. Cosmopolitan ideals are not automatically the key to effecting change in organizations.

Likewise, a longing for simpler days may be nothing more than a reversion to the oppression of the dominant culture. Change is not always growth, nor is stability stagnation. The implication for cosmopolitan leaders is that they must be prepared for the chaos they will create when they attempt to change local culture. Do they understand what norms and values are sacred within the institution's culture? Have they properly thought through the ramifications of their actions? Or, are they ignorant of the turmoil they will create with the imposition of their cosmopolitan ideas on a strong local culture?

We are not advocating a contingency theory of leadership that adapts to the changing environment, however. We are troubled by such forms of leadership that assume social and organizational relationships are neutral. Such perspectives assume the leader's role is to adapt to the changing needs of the organization. How these needs are defined, who defines them, and what role the leader should play in imposing these needs is seen as unproblematic by contingency theorists, however (see Foster, 1986).

It is not sufficient for leaders to assume they can simply adapt to contingencies without an understanding of the culture and nature of the organization. Leaders who simply employ cosmopolitan solutions in the face of local problems are incapable of understanding what indeed the contingencies really are. As Burns (1978, p. 20) suggests, moral leadership is democratic because it supports both the "leader and the led." One becomes a moral leader only through a conscious and critical awareness of the organizational culture and of the society in which it dwells. The actions of a moral leader consider how decisions affect both cosmopolitan and local members of the organization. In particular, moral leaders consider how their actions affect the least advantaged members of the institution--those individuals who are marginalized by the dominant society (see Rawls, 1970).

Conflict emerges, however, when leaders are either unaware or falsely conscious of the ramifications of their actions. Chaos ensues when leaders are insensitive to the local culture, as we found at Lord of the Flies Community College. Just as British civilization and the wild culture of the boys in Lord of the Flies were in conflict, so the webs of significance spun by the students, faculty, and administration of LFCC were in conflict. Whereas the academic dean saw the organization as disintegrating, because the cosmopolitans were leaving, in reality, the locals may simply be reasserting their dominance. Has the underlying culture of the college really changed or simply co-existed with the culture of the cosmopolitans, only to re-emerge given the slightest provocation?

To some members of LFCC the underlying local culture may resemble the boys in Lord of the Flies, but it is, nevertheless, a coherent and viable culture with its set of intact values, norms, and assumptions. Just as the thin veneer of civilization wears off

quickly in the novel, the community college shed its cosmopolitan shell, the wild local culture reemerged, only to be seemingly overshadowed by the prospect of a new cosmopolitan president. Much like the naval officer who appears at the end of the novel, the image of civilization in his gold epaulettes and his white cap, a new cosmopolitan administrator at the community college should also ask: "How many of you are there? Nobody killed, I hope? Any dead bodies?"

We are left to wonder, however, if the naval officer will not be the next victim of the boys in Lord of the Flies, just as we ponder who might be the next unwary victim of this community college's local culture?

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